

GENERAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT (GSD) USE OF REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ) METHOD IN THE A/E CONSULTANT SELECTION PROCESS

Although GSD's Director, with assistance from Chief of Design & Construction Division, determines the method to be used by Project Managers to review and rank potential consultants, as a rule, on projects with estimated construction costs greater than \$3,000,000.00 GSD will use the RFQ method.

GSD's A/E consultant selection process is as follows:

Preparation/Advertising RFQ –

- The RFQ is prepared then advertised on two consecutive Fridays in the Houston Business Journal, and both the advertisement and RFQ remain posted on the City's website until City Engineer decides to have them removed.
- Project Manager also provides an adequate number of RFQs, both hard copies and Compact Discs (CDs), as noted in advertisement to be placed at GSD's receptionist desk for pickup by hopeful Respondents; Project Manager also provides a GSD standard RFQ Holders Sign-in Sheet for probable Respondents to register with the City.
- Typically, to facilitate matters, to better control the process and coordinate questions being asked and responses given, GSD states in both the advertisement and RFQ that any/all questions be submitted by probable Respondents to the City Engineer in writing, mailed, faxed, or emailed.

Pre-submittal Meeting –

- In the week immediately following the second advertisement GSD holds a Pre-submittal Meeting at the time and place indicated in the advertisement and RFQ.
- At Pre-submittal Meeting a sign-in sheet is distributed among the attendees, questions are taken, and clarifications to the RFQ may be made. After meeting, the sign-in sheet is posted on City's website. Typically we request that any/all questions be asked of City Engineer (in writing), before C.O.B. the Friday, ten days before the Monday Submittal Date. If questions asked require changes be made in the RFQ or process, GSD prepares an addendum. As stated in the RFQ, no addendum will be issued later than noon on Tuesday before the Monday Submittal Date. After City Engineer signs and dates addendum, GSD "issues" addendum to all meeting attendees per sign-in sheet and to any other known RFQ Holders. Project Manager contacts others as may be necessary, and places hard copies of it at GSD's receptionist too; and since the advertisement and RFQ are posted on GSD's website an electronic scanned version of the addendum is also posted.

Submittal Date –

- Responses to the RFQ take the form of Statements Of Qualifications (SOQs). All interested parties (Respondents) must submit their SOQ to the City Secretary at or before the time and place indicated in the RFQ and advertisement; typically it's on a Monday by 2:00 P.M.
- City Secretary stamps-in all SOQs received by the 2:00 P.M. Monday deadline; then after logging all SOQs in contacts the City Engineer for their pick-up.
- Late submittals will not be accepted for any reason.

Evaluating SOQs –

- Project Manager and Design Team Leader assembles the initial Selection Committee as follows:
 - ❑ Five Members – Two Project Managers from GSD's D & C Division (classified as Project Manager, or above), with one having a Design background and the other a Construction background, and one individual designated to participate by the Chief of Operations, of GSD's Property Management, plus two Client Department Representatives. At least one is to be from the Client Department but no more than 2 of 5 is to be allowed.
 - ❑ Four Members (**minimum**) – Only if Client Department fails to designate any representatives for the Selection Committee, then the Team Leader will join the two others from D & C, plus the one from Property Management, to fill all Selection Committee positions.
- Team Leader provides Chief of D & C with proposed Selection Committee for review. Upon approval forwards list of proposed Selection Committee to City Engineer before "possibly" forwarding it to GSD's Director for further/final approval.
- Before Project Manager distributes copies of SOQs to the Selection Committee for review, and schedules their first meeting, Project Manager first determines that SOQs follow required format and contain all information requested, scoring each Respondent's ability to fulfill the criteria advertised in the RFQ (RE: Standard RFQ paragraph V, item A).
- Project Manager prepares a matrix (already listing each Respondent's ability to follow instructions "or" instructing Selection Committee to ignore scoring item) then forwards the SOQs with the matrix to each member of the Selection Committee to facilitate evaluation/scoring. (RE: Standard Evaluator A-E SOQs Score Sheet.)
- Project Manager holds first meeting with Selection Committee. The Project Manager will provide a closed container with folded paper notes in it; each note will have a single number on it numbered to match the size of the Selection Committee. Each member will take a note/number. *The number on the note is to be known only by the members of the Selection Committee. All written deliberation, ranking, votes, et cetera, are identified by this number only. All resulting data is presented using these numbers. No data will be identified as coming from an individual member of the Selection Committee. The final results are presented as committee findings.*

- To better balance the procedure, GSD deletes the overall “highest” and “lowest” scores from each scoring of a Respondent, i.e., if there are the expected five members on the Selection Committee each Respondent will then be graded by three scores remaining of the original five. This process will result in a shorter list of “better qualified” Respondents with no more than five Respondents (**at GSD Director’s discretion**) to be interviewed.
- The Selection Committee may find it necessary to meet again to deliberate on, (1) each Respondent’s ability to follow instructions, (2) each Respondent’s ability to fulfill the criteria advertised in the RFQ, (3) the strengths and weaknesses of each Respondent that provided a SOQ, and (4) any other information pertinent to their ability to complete the work.

Short-listing of Respondents –

- Project Manager prepares notification to “all” Respondents, from GSD’s Director, in which it indicates those firms that have been short-listed for interviews; short-listed firms are scheduled for interview in same order SOQs were received by City Secretary. Team Leader reviews before forwarding notification along with scoring matrix (RE: Standard Comparison of A-E Scores [Matrix]) to City Engineer for review of SOQ scoring matrix and evaluation process, and concurrence of proposed short-listing prior to forwarding formal notification to GSD’s Director for approval/signature.
- With list of Respondents to be interviewed approved by GSD’s Director ALL Respondents are notified of those short-listed for interviews with date and times scheduled; notification to Respondents short-listed for interviews is sent to ALL Respondents, and posted on our website.

Interviews –

- Respondents are to explain to the Selection Committee why their team is the best qualified for the project advertised. Also, the intent during the interviews is for those familiar with the SOQs, the Selection Committee, to “flush-out” any areas that were not fully made clear to them in the SOQs.
- In preparation for the interviews, Selection Committee will make up questions, with some possibly tailored to be asked for a specific member of the Selection Committee to facilitate their scoring of the remaining qualified Respondents. The Team Leader, or possibly another as designated by the City Engineer, monitors the interviews, and will ask the same questions of each Respondent; the Selection Committee will then score Respondent’s response to each of the questions asked, and each Selection Committee member scores their presentation. (RE: Standard Evaluator – Interview/Questions Score Sheet.)
- Team Leader will combine the scores of all members of the Selection Committee for each Respondent. Per the RFQ, interview scores will be worth half of a Respondent’s total score, in which both their interview scores, one related to their responses to the questions asked and the other for presentation, both being of equal value. With previous SOQ scores being worth the other half of a Respondent’s total score. Team Leader will delete the overall “highest” and “lowest” scores from each scoring of a Respondent as before, and then provide a FINAL grade for each Respondent accordingly. At end of interviews the Respondent with the highest total FINAL score will be determined as being the “most qualified” for the specified Project. (RE: Standard Final Comparison of A-E SOQ + Interview Scores [Matrix]).

- Immediately upon completion of the interviews Team Leader ranks each of the Respondents from the most qualified being ranked number one on down to the least. Team Leader prepares GSD's required Request To Negotiate (RTN) inter-office memorandum from Chief D & C to GSD's Director requesting authorization to initiate contract negotiations with the A/E Firm selected most qualified. Team Leader forwards RTN through City Engineer for review of the final grading matrix/process and concurrence of the proposed ranking before possibly forwarding it to GSD's Director, recommending approval.

Selection of Most Qualified –

- Upon receipt of the resulting required Authorization To Negotiate (ATN), i.e., RTN signed by GSD's Director, the Project Manager prepares formal notification from Chief of D & C to A/E Firm selected most qualified and can begin negotiations. Project Manager also prepares notification from Chief of D & C to all Respondents that a selection has been made, and thanking them for participating in the process.
- After selected firm has been notified the Final Comparison of A-E SOQ + Interview Scores (Matrix) is posted on our website.
- For transparency, GSD prepares a "debriefing" booklet to facilitate a better response to any further questions that may be asked about the overall process and scoring. Also, Respondents are welcomed to request a meeting be scheduled with the Selection Committee, for a debriefing if necessary.

End of A/E (RFQ) Selection Process